

Mayor Vows to Investigate Alleged Harassment of 311 Users After Recent Streetsblog Investigation

By Jesse Coburn | Oct 28, 2021 | 12 COMMENTS



Mayor Bill de Blasio in January. Photo: Ed Reed / Mayor's Office

The city will “immediately investigate” allegations from residents who say they received harassing phone calls and messages after filing 311 complaints to the NYPD, Mayor de Blasio said at a news conference Wednesday.

“Whether [such calls are] coming from a city employee or someplace else, it’s not good,” the mayor said when asked about the alleged harassment. “What we need to know is what happened in those cases.”

The mayor is the second city official to call for a probe into the harassment allegations, which Streetsblog reported last week in a broad [investigation](#) into the NYPD’s handling of 311 complaints about illegal parking, chronically reckless driving and abandoned vehicles. Manhattan Council Member Ben Kallos has also [pushed](#) for an investigation and asked anyone who had received such calls or messages to [contact](#) his office.

Users of 311 told Streetsblog they’ve received strange voicemails from unidentified callers, or calls in the middle of the night, or a barrage of calls from concealed phone numbers — all after filing illegal parking complaints. One 311 user [received](#) a text message that read “keep fucking around” from an unidentified sender after Streetsblog [published a story](#) about his earlier exchange with a cop over illegal parking complaints. Even Council Member Bob Holden told Streetsblog he’s received calls at 3 a.m. from officers over 311 complaints filed hours earlier, which he called “inappropriate.”

The mayor’s pledge to investigate the harassment allegations intensifies the scrutiny on the NYPD as the City Council ratchets up its own [inquiry](#) into the department’s handling of 311 complaints.

SHERWOOD_000210

On Tuesday, the Council subpoenaed the NYPD for records on the department's response illegal parking complaints submitted via 311, including some that Council investigators found the police had ignored, despite reporting otherwise.

The council had asked for the records previously, but the NYPD [did not](#) provide them.

"While we appreciate NYPD's commitment to have its Internal Affairs Bureau investigate this matter further, and to impose appropriate discipline, this does not supplant our oversight role and our responsibility to examine the extent to which the Department's system for handling [311 service requests] is functioning or, as the case may be, malfunctioning," Council leaders wrote to Police Commissioner Dermot Shea on Tuesday.

De Blasio also expressed concern about another finding of Streetsblog's investigation: that officers routinely dismiss complaints about driver misconduct as outside police jurisdiction. The 311 system automatically directs complaints about illegal parking, chronically reckless driving and abandoned vehicles with license plates to the police, and former city officials said such issues are clearly in police jurisdiction.

De Blasio agreed.

"These are real issues and they sure as hell seem like they're NYPD issues to me," he said. He pledged to direct his police department "to ensure that every one of these complaints is followed up on."

Streetsblog's investigation was based on an analysis of more than 26 million 311 complaints since 2010, and interviews with dozens of city officials, former city police officers, safe-streets advocates, attorneys and residents who have filed years of 311 reports. This reporting showed police routinely ignore notifications about illegal parking, chronically reckless driving and abandoned vehicles, fostering a culture of lawlessness on city streets that residents say is getting worse as traffic deaths [climb](#) to their highest point in years. Some of Streetsblog's findings included:



How Streetsblog investigated 311 (click the picture).

- The NYPD now closes thousands of service requests about driver misconduct each year in under five minutes, up from only five such complaints that were closed so quickly in 2010. Former city officials said it was implausible that officers were actually investigating and resolving so many complaints in under five minutes, given it takes the NYPD more than seven minutes on average to respond to even the most critical emergencies, per city [data](#).
- Officers rarely write tickets in response to 311 reports on driver misconduct.
- Residents who together have filed more than an estimated 1,000 driver misconduct service requests say those efforts have almost never led to the problems being addressed.
- Some officers appear especially dismissive of such complaints. In one Brooklyn precinct, 16 percent of driver misconduct reports this year have been closed in under five minutes.

An NYPD spokesperson said the harassment allegations reported by Streetsblog are "under internal review," but did not respond to questions about that review.

Filed Under: 311, Bill de Blasio, NYPD, Streetsblog



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BetsyK

a year ago

The trouble with 311 is that they don't follow up with people who make complaints to check that it was resolved satisfactorily, something that's now standard in customer service. If it did, they would have a much clearer record of how many of these complaint records have been frauded by the NYPD.

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thomas040 → BetsyK

a year ago

that would at least cause some oversight if there was a quality control implemented.

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ENY

a year ago

The mayor then promised the investigation would begin on January 1st, 2022 or whatever.

3 0 • Reply • Share ›



running_bond

a year ago

I don't get the NYPD resistance to 311 calls. These calls make it easier for cops to hit quotas and write tickets by telling them exactly where to go to catch offenders so obvious that they merited a citizen response, and yet they are going way out of their way to avoid them. What's the motive for their behavior?

2 0 • Reply • Share ›



BetsyK → running_bond

a year ago

Because in a lot of cases, the complaints are about the illegal parking of its own members.

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Miser → running_bond

a year ago

They don't really need help finding offenders. If you wanted to find illegal parking, bike/bus lane blockers, illegal trucks etc you could just walk down almost any street. The problem isn't that they can't find these people, it's that a lot of them are fellow officers, and they have an entire culture of corruption around cars, where they don't feel cars should be regulated by the law at all. In their minds car drivers are wealthy and powerful and own the street, (including them.) Poor and/or powerless people take public transit and bikes. Laws and enforcement are for the latter. This is why people are always amazed that drivers that literally kill pedestrians aren't even arrested much less charged. Once you adjust to the idea that this framework is how cops see the world all these other issues make a lot more sense. (not charging killer drivers, illegal cop parking, gleefully blocking bike lanes, ignoring 311 reports, fighting against anything that takes space from cars, etc)

9 0 • Reply • Share ›



glittertitsandshortbangs → Miser

a year ago

They could sit at any all-way stop sign in any borough and issue tickets all day/night long. One after the other.

I just learned in DC that it's an extra \$250 ticket if you roll a crosswalk with a pedestrian anywhere near it.

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City Investigating NYPD 311 Harassment Allegations After Streetsblog Report

By Jesse Coburn | Dec 21, 2021

The Department of Investigation said agency staffers were probing allegations that Streetsblog reported two months ago.



Jacob

a year ago

Excellent investigation! Starting to shine a light on this endemic issue. Keep at this, and keep submitting those 311 complaints for illegal parking.

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Andy Gilbert

a year ago

When dozens of officers are fired and jailed for these harassing phone calls I'll believe the Mayor isn't a spineless fool...

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Council Member Calls For Probe of Alleged 311 Harassment

By Jesse Coburn | Oct 26, 2021

And meanwhile, Council Member Bob Holden told Streetsblog he has also been the victim of "inappropriate" calls from cops.



Tipster Sues NYPD for Harassment Over 311 Complaints about Illegal Parking

SHERWOOD_000216

By Julianne Cuba | Jan 23, 2023

The once anonymous tipster who alleged that members of the NYPD had harassed and threatened him after he reported the cops for illegal parking has now publicly filed a lawsuit in federal court against the NYPD and the city for violating his First Amendment rights.

You Can Now Tell 311 About Bike Lane Blockers

By David Meyer | Nov 1, 2016

New Yorkers can now report drivers illegally blocking bike lanes via the city's 311 website and mobile apps, according to an update from 311 yesterday. The 311 website and the "NYC 311" app enable users to report quality of life, health, and safety complaints to the city. Yesterday's update added "blocked bike lane" to the set of "illegal parking" violations that can [...]



City Hall Condemns Death Threats to 311 User Who Filed Illegal Parking Complaint to NYPD

By Jesse Coburn | Feb 10, 2022

The statement followed a Streetsblog story Wednesday about the series of threatening phone calls a Park Slope resident received after he filed a 311 complaint to the NYPD about a truck parked illegally in a bus stop.



NYPD Ignores Council Request for Info on Allegedly Fraudulent 311 Responses

By Jesse Coburn | Oct 25, 2021

Council leaders had asked the NYPD to provide materials related to 14 311 service requests about illegal parking that police officers had marked as resolved despite never responding to the scenes of the infractions, according to council investigators.

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